

COLORADO

Glenwood Springs Field Office



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Discovering Recreation in Glenwood Springs

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Welcome to the Glenwood Springs Field Office! Our office manages a variety of recreation settings and important scenic corridors. There are opportunities for numerous recreation activities on public lands that are adjacent to two world class resorts: Vail and Aspen. We are just off I-70 and neighbor 11 communities, the Colorado, Eagle, and Roaring Fork Rivers, and the nation's busiest National Recreation Forest — the White River National Forest.

In addition to providing destination-related recreation, visitors and area residents can enjoy activities such as jeeping, wildlife watching, fishing, ballooning, whitewater rafting, kayaking, hunting, hiking, biking, horseback riding, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and camping.

Let's begin our tour at the northeast corner of our resource area on the Upper Colorado River. We'll begin by driving north up highway 131 from the Wolcott exit off of I-70. Make sure you have plenty of gas, food and water, as there are very few areas to stop once you leave I-70. Shortly past State Bridge and the intersection with County Road 11 you will see a sign welcoming you to Routt County. Just across the street, to the west, is the Colorado River Road, County Road 301. Turn left and be sure to set your trip meter to zero as you begin to travel.

Mile 1...

We'll begin traveling west on the Colorado River Road through a Pinyon and Juniper forest, surrounded by red rock walls. Within five miles, the road will meander down and the railroad tracks as well as the beautiful Upper Colorado River will appear in front of you. As you continue to drive you will travel down the slope and eventually be driving beside the river. (If you enjoy boating, try doing it as a float trip. There is a boat ramp, which can be accessed for a fee, at State Bridge or you can go further up the river on scenic byway 11 and choose one of the BLM ramps.)



COLORADO RIVER





While you travel through this area, keep in mind the diverse history of the area. Evidence uncovered by archaeologists suggests that there was human occupation along the Colorado River from 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. The State Bridge and Blue Hills areas were possibly year-round settlements. The Ute Indians occupied the area until the late 1800s when they were displaced by European settlers.

The railroad was extended from the Front Range through this area in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The railroad between the McCoy and Dotsero areas was completed in 1934, and was one of the last railroad construction projects in the country. It is still used as a major east-west freight and Amtrak route. Before the railroad, stagecoaches provided freight, mail, and passenger service to settlements along the river. You can still see the remains of the stagecoach route and ferry crossing near McCoy and along Highway 131.

The westward expansion of the United States claimed all lands as public domain under federal control. Homesteading in the late 1800s and early 1900s led to today's private land ownership pattern. Homesteaders settled in broader valleys with arable land and descendants of original homesteaders still own some of today's ranches along the river. Due to homesteading, public lands are found along the river where the valley was too rugged and narrow for farming. These lands now provide valuable recreation and natural resources for the public to enjoy.

Mile 7.5...

Seven-and-a-half miles from where we began, you will arrive at the BLM's first developed recreation site, Catamount. Catamount is nestled into a grove of cottonwood trees, which provides a perfect amount of shade during the summer months. Facilities at the site include pit toilets, camping and a wonderful boat ramp that even a beginner can easily use. A small creek runs through this recreation area and provides solitude as it creeps through the rocks below, eventually entering the Colorado River. The confluence just below the campground provides a good fishing hole. If you are floating the river and plan on continuing, be aware of the rapids you will soon encounter. Although the boat ramp may be a snap, the rapids down stream may not be suitable for beginners.

The next mile of road is beautiful in the fall when the leaves are changing colors. The road continues to follow the small creek which is surrounded by cottonwood trees. In the fall the trees are brilliant shades of gold that contrast with the red-rock cliffs in the background. Soon you will emerge from this small canyon and see open meadows and rolling hills just below the Castle Peak Wilderness Study Area. The predominant rock formation, which inspired the location's name, Castle Peak, will soon appear. This is one of the four Wilderness Study Areas the Glenwood Springs Field Office manages.



RODEO RAPID JUST BEFORE PINBALL RECREATION SITE



VIEWS OF THE FLATTOPS



The road then wanders away from the river and climbs up the mountains where views of the Flattop Mountains will soon appear. As the Flattops emerge in the background to the west, views of the river and the beautiful canyons it forms emerge in the foreground. Boaters can get away from the road and enjoy some solitude. There you will be surrounded by spectacular cut banks and various geologic formations.

Mile 11.5...

Bikers have an excellent opportunity to take a ride on primarily dirt roads and experience this valley from a different angle. Eleven-and-a-half miles from your origin, the road will split. You can either continue toward Derby Mesa or you can enjoy a bike loop on County Road 39. Although the loop is not managed by the BLM, this 11 mile bike loop offers amazing views of the Flattop Mountains, Derby Mesa, and the surrounding area. We suggest continuing a mile down the road and starting your ride at Derby Junction where there is a historic Conoco sign on the left side of the road. You can ask permission from the land owner to park by the sign and begin biking back up the Colorado River Road, a little over a mile, to the junction with County Road 39. You will end your loop ride directly across the street from the Conoco sign. Hope you still have gas! Don't be mistaken by the Conoco sign, for you will not be able to find gas at this location.

Mile 15.5...

On this road you will reach our second developed recreation site called Pinball. It offers river-side picnicking with excellent views of the red rocks on the far side of the river. This is again an excellent place to take advantage of great fishing just below the picnic area. If you decide to make this your final destination by boat, be aware that there is not a boat ramp here and you will have to carry your boat up hill.

Mile 20...

In approximately twenty miles from the start of our tour you will begin to see the shear cliffs to the east of the road. This is the west edge of the Bull Gulch Wilderness Study Area.

Mile 27...

Just after mile twenty-seven, from where we began, you will come to a road that heads to the west called Sweetwater. This is an excellent road to explore with scenic vistas that eventually brings you on to the Flattops and the National Forest.

Mile 28...

Shortly after mile twenty-eight you will come to another BLM developed recreation site called Cottonwood Island. Just prior to arriving you will see the cottonwood tree island in the middle of the river which gave this location its name. This site offers a narrow boat ramp, which may not be adequate for beginners trying to maneuver a trailer for the first time. There is a campsite that over looks the river. This area provides another excellent fishing opportunity. The river is accessible through the picnic site or by following the very narrow boat ramp down. At the base of the ramp the river merges back together from a prior split. This merge, in addition to the eddie on the far side of the river, provides wonderful fishing opportunities.

Mile 30...

Just after mile marker 30 is Lyons Gulch on the left side of the road. Go slow; this recreation site is located just as you start to round the bend. There is a developed



BULL GULCH WILDERNESS STUDY AREA FROM CO RIVER ROAD



camping area, fishing opportunities, restrooms, and a small, steep, stone boat ramp is also available here.

Mile 32.5...

Another great side trip is off to the right on Coffee Pot Road. You will begin driving up this road through a beautiful canyon where diverse geologic features form the landscape.

Mile 34.5...

As we arrive at Interstate 70 we come to the end of our tour. You can either continue your journey through the magnificent Glenwood Springs canyon or head east to the Continental Divide. Feel free to stop by our office in west Glenwood Springs for additional information and brochures. If you have any questions, we can also be reached at (970) 947-2800. Thanks for coming along and we hope to see you again soon!



RAILROAD JUST BEFORE YOU APPROACH THE INTERSTATE